

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

NAME OF PROPOSED ACTION. Force Structure Change at Shaw Air Force Base (AFB), South Carolina

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES. The United States Air Force (Air Force) proposes a Force Structure Change at Shaw AFB to provide more capability to the Air Force's Expeditionary Aerospace Force (EAF) Construct. The proposed action would allow the most flexible weapons systems to continue in operational service with the cost saving benefits associated with common equipment and support personnel. This action is an initial step toward the Common Configuration Implementation Program (CCIP) being implemented to improve the combat capability of the active duty F-16 fleet.

Shaw AFB is currently equipped with four squadrons of F-16 Block 50 aircraft – three 18 Primary Mission Aircraft Inventory (PMAI) squadrons and one 24 PMAI squadron. Under the proposed action, two 18 PMAI squadrons would each receive six new F-16 Block 50 aircraft. A third squadron would maintain its current inventory of 24 PMAI F-16 Block 50 aircraft. The fourth squadron would be deactivated and 18 PMAI F-16 Block 50 aircraft would be transferred from Shaw AFB. This would result in an overall decrease of six aircraft at Shaw AFB, and a final total of 72 PMAI. No facility construction or modification would be required as a result of this force structure change, however the proposed action would result in an overall decrease of approximately 300 personnel at Shaw AFB.

In addition to the proposed action, the Air Force evaluated two alternatives. Alternative A reallocates existing aircraft from the deactivated squadron rather than adding newly manufactured F-16 Block 50 aircraft. Twelve aircraft from the deactivated squadron would be assigned to two 18 PMAI squadrons (6 each) with the remaining six aircraft transferred from Shaw AFB. Alternative B, the No-Action alternative, would not realign the aircraft mix at Shaw AFB to provide greater support of the EAF Construct. Further, it would not allow initial phases of the CCIP to begin.

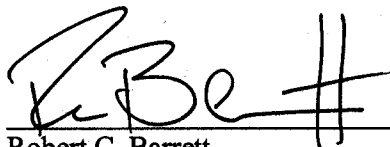
SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES. The Environmental Assessment (EA) provides an analysis of the potential environmental consequences associated with the Force Structure Change under the proposed action, Alternative A, or Alternative B. Resource areas evaluated in detail to identify potential environmental consequences include: airspace management, safety, noise, air quality, land use/transportation, biological resources, cultural resources and socioeconomics/Environmental Justice. The EA demonstrates that the proposed Force Structure Change would not result in significant environmental impacts to any resource area.

Environmental impacts resulting from implementing the proposed action or Alternative A would be equivalent to one another. Under the proposed action, the total number of aircraft assigned to Shaw AFB would be reduced from 78 to 72, with an approximate 8 percent decrease in Shaw AFB F-16 operations being conducted from the base and in associated military training airspace. This decrease would also be realized as a result of Alternative A. Activity level of other users of the airspace would remain consistent. Airspace management, ground, explosive, and flight safety effects would be slightly positive and essentially not discernible for the proposed action or Alternative A. Changes in noise levels associated with the proposed action or Alternative A are not discernible (~0.1 dB) when compared to the No-Action alternative. The decrease in aircraft operations would result in a minimal change in air quality for either the proposed action or Alternative A. There are no adverse impacts to air quality; therefore, a conformity

determination is not required. The proposed action or Alternative A would have no significant impacts to land use or transportation at Shaw AFB or beneath the affected airspace. It is unlikely that the proposed action or Alternative A would have an effect on species listed or proposed for listing in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), on critical wildlife habitat, or on cultural resources because no construction is proposed and airspace use would be somewhat reduced.

Personnel at Shaw AFB would be reduced by approximately 300 under either the proposed action or Alternative A. Secondary employment in the region would decrease by approximately 70 workers as a result of reduced off-base expenditures. The employment impact associated with the proposed action and alternative would be a decrease of 0.8 percent of total regional employment. A potential employment impact of this magnitude would not be considered significant. The overall housing vacancy rate could increase from its current level of 9.6 percent to 10.4 percent under the proposed action or Alternative A. Although noticeable, this decrease in housing demand would not be expected to have significant impact on the housing market due to the region's long-term experience with a changing military population. Overall, the proposed action is consistent with mission changes at Shaw AFB that have resulted in varied personnel assignments over the past ten years. Neither the proposed action, nor Alternative A results in disproportionate adverse effects on minority persons, low-income populations, or children.

CONCLUSION. Based on the findings of the EA conducted in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, and Air Force Instruction 32-7061, and after careful review of the potential impacts, I conclude that implementation of the proposed action would not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human or the natural environmental. Therefore, a Finding of No Significant Impact is warranted, and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for this action.


Robert C. Barrett
Chief, Environmental Division

18 Nov 2002
Date